THE AGRICULTURAL SITUATION.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

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A TIME TO KEEP THINGS IN BALANCE

After getting away to a slow start, the season is hardly yet in full stride. The weather has been unduly wet in the East, dry in the West, and cool in the South. Early fruits and vegetables have begun to roll toward the cities in considerable volume, however, and within the month wheat harvest and haying will be well forward. The labor situation tends to grow easier, if anything. The general level of prices shows a declining tendency, while farm products have slightly advanced.

Two underlying factors now color the situation. For one, the program of agricultural production has arrived at the best general balance since 1920. The community at large hardly understands how far-reaching and skillful a readjustment farmers have made in the major lines of production. They have obeyed economic signals as expertly as any industry ever did. Only, this takes time in agriculture; no board of directors can shift overnight the cropping system and growing animals on six million farms.

It will soon become important to recognize the point where readjustment in certain lines has gone far enough. A painfully achieved balance can be upset again by farmers, themselves. The tendency this season is to overdo poultry, corn, butter and potato production; and it may presently be to cut down too far on wheat, beef cattle, and hogs. The real production situation frequently changes some time before that fact is registered in price changes. The corn-hog situation has been re-made this spring but it will not be fully realized until next winter.

The second underlying factor is that the unusual, industrial boom of the past two years appears now definitely on the wane. One meaning of that is likely to be some leveling down of the disparity between city and country. Slackening urban demand for industrial products apparently means, under present circumstances, some easing down in prices of things that farmers have to buy, likewise in wages.

Of course, another effect of an industrial slump may be a somewhat narrower market for lamb, butter, fresh eggs, and semi-luxury fruits and vegetables. But if reasonable balance is maintained on the production end, agriculture as a whole now stands to gain the greatest economic leverage since 1919.

KEY REGIONS AT A GLANCE

THE EAST - Work and growth badly held up by rain and cold. Oats and early crop planting two weeks or more behind; oats been abandoned in some northern areas. Dairy situation remains discouraging. Pasture and feed shortage hard on livestock in southern sections.

THE SOUTH - Cotton coming up to irregular stands; considerable replanting done; chopping well along. Boll weevils appearing over much of Belt. All southern crops handicapped by rain and cold. Texas conditions good; represents perhaps most optimistic present region in country.

CORN BELT - A large part of corn is in the ground, but the weather has retarded growth. Acreage said to be increased but no definite estimates yet made thereof. Considerable land abandoned from winter grain or early crops is going into corn. Hog situation still dominated by heavy supply. General backwardness of season, high wages, low hog prices and financial difficulties make up a rather depressed background.

WHEAT BELT - Winter grain headed fairly well but much short straw. Suffering some from drought in Kansas and Nebraska. Harvest beginning in Southwest. Spring wheat starting off fairly well. Wheat Belt not in very optimistic frame of mind.

RANGE COUNTRY - Good calf and lamb crops. Shearing about over; wool beginning to move slowly. Range in good condition, on the whole. Sheep men looking forward to another good season. Undercurrant in cattle industry is also more optimistic, though situation is still weighted down with financial difficulty.

PACIFIC COAST - Fruit industry in North hurt by frosts; wheat doing none too well, either. South somewhat depressed by drought and foot-and-mouth disease. Latter situation improving but is stubborn battle and has cost many thousand head of good stock. Fruit prospects in South moderately good.

AVERAGE PRICES, AT THE FARM, OF REPRESENTATIVE PRODUCTS
Month Ending May 1, 1924.

Actual prices received at the farm by producers. Average of reports covering the United States, weighted according to relative importance of county and State. Figures compiled by Division of Crop and Livestock Estimates of this Bureau. Quotations in dollars or cents.

Shows 1913, year ago, and latest available months.

		Apr. 1913	Apr. 1923	Mar. 1924	Apr. 1924
Cotton, per lb.	¢	11.7	27.6	27.7	28.7
Corn, per bu.	¢	55.2	79.6	77.2	78.2
Wheat, per bu.	¢	80.0	108.4	98.8	95.8
Hay, per ton	$	10.42	12.54	13.63	13.73
Potatoes, per bu.	¢	49.2	77.4	87.8	91.1
Oats, per bu.	¢	33.6	44.8	46.2	46.5
Apples, per bu.	¢	86.6	156.5	129.1	129.4
Beef cattle, per 100 lbs.	$	6.08	5.78	5.63	5.82
Hogs, per 100 lbs.	$	7.94	7.45	6.63	6.70
Eggs, per dozen	¢	15.9	21.6	20.4	19.1
Butter, per lb.	¢	27.3	40.8	43.2	40.3
Wool, per lb.	¢	17.7	39.2	38.2	38.4
Veal calves, per 100 lbs.	$	7.38	7.78	8.43	8.33
Lambs, per 100 lbs.	$	6.59	10.69	11.22	11.32

No material change in the price situation during April. Some slight seasonal tendency upward, impelled by slight rise in cotton, corn, potatoes and cattle.

Products higher than the general price level, and therefore "high priced", included cotton and wool. Butter stood at the average level. Products below the general price level, and therefore "low priced", included potatoes, corn, hay, wheat, eggs, beef cattle, hogs. Foregoing all named in order of relative price, cotton being highest, hogs lowest.

PRICE INDEXES FOR MONTH ENDING MAY 1, 1924.

1913 = 100

Farm products figures from this Bureau; commodity groups from Bureau of Labor Statistics. Shows year ago, and latest available months:

Farm Products

(Prices at the farm)

	Apr. 1923	Mar. 1924	Apr. 1924	Month Trend
Cotton	222	223	231	Higher
Corn	134	130	132	Higher
Wheat	138	126	122	Lower
Hay	114	124	125	Higher
Potatoes	120	137	142	Higher
Beef cattle	98	95	99	Higher
Hogs	99	89	89	Same
Eggs	112	106	99	Lower
Butter	148	160	148	Lower
Wool	235	229	230	Higher

Commodity Groups

(Wholesale Prices)

	Apr. 1923	Mar. 1924	Apr. 1924	Month Trend
Farm products	141	137	139	Higher
Food, etc.	144	141	137	Lower
Cloths & clothing	205	191	189	Lower
Fuel & lighting	200	181	179	Lower
Metal & met. products	154	144	139	Lower
Bldg. materials	204	182	182	Same
Chemicals, etc.	136	130	128	Lower
House-furnishing goods	187	175	175	Same
ALL COMMODITIES	159	150	148	LOWER

RELATIVE PURCHASING POWER

(At April 1924 Farm Prices)

1913 = 100

	Of a Unit of:				
In terms of:	Cotton	Corn	Wheat	Hay	Potatoes
All commodities	156	89	82	84	96
Cloths, etc.	122	70	65	66	75
Fuel, etc.	129	74	68	70	79
Metals, etc.	166	95	88	90	102
Bldg. materials	127	73	67	69	78
House-furnishing goods	132	75	70	71	81

	Beef cattle	Swine	Eggs	Butter	Wool
All commodities	67	60	67	100	155
Cloths, etc.	52	47	52	78	122
Fuel, etc.	55	50	55	83	129
Metals, etc.	71	64	71	107	165
Bldg. materials	54	49	54	81	126
House-furnishing goods	57	51	57	85	131

Of this group of 10 important products, only cotton and wool were high enough in price during April so that a unit could be exchanged for other types of commodities at an indicated advantage.

However, there was a slight general improvement in relative position, over the previous month, except in case of butter and wheat. Farm products moved up slightly in price while non-agricultural commodities came down slightly. This resulted in raising the general purchasing power index of farm products to 76 in April, as compared with 74 during the three previous months.

GENERAL TREND OF WAGES AND PRICES

1913 = 100

Year and Month	General Wage Level	Farm Wages	Retail Price of Food	Wholesale Price of Food	Wholesale Price All Commodities
	N.Y.factory workers (1914=100)	(Monthly without board)	Dept. of Labor	Dept. of Labor	Dept. of Labor
1913	---	100	100	100	100
1914	100	99	102	102	98
1915	103	99	101	105	101
1916	116	108	114	121	127
1917	131	133	146	167	177
1918	188	155	168	188	194
1919	188	186	186	207	206
1920	226	214	203	220	226
1921	206	143	153	144	147
1922	201	138	142	138	149
1923	218	155	146	144	154
1923					
January	210	133	144	141	156
February	207	---	142	141	157
March	216	---	142	143	159
April	216	147	143	144	159
May	221	---	143	144	156
June	223	---	144	142	153
July	221	159	147	141	151
August	217	---	146	142	150
September	220	---	149	147	154
October	222	161	150	148	153
November	221	---	151	148	152
December	224	---	150	147	151
1924					
January	223	151	149	143	151
February	222	---	147	143	152
March	226	153	144	141	150
April	222	157	141	137	148

GENERAL TREND OF PRICES

1913 = 100

Year and month	Farm Price Crops 15th of month	Farm Price Livestock 15th of month	Farm Price Crops and Livestock Combined	Wholesale price of Non-Agrl. Commodities*	Purchasing Power of Farm Products#
1913	100	100	100	100	100
1914	108	103	106	94	112
1915	110	95	102	97	106
1916	124	111	118	132	89
1917	208	164	186	176	106
1918	224	192	208	186	112
1919	234	198	216	195	111
1920	238	168	203	234	86
1921	109	107	108	161	67
1922	113	111	112	163	69
1923	136	103	120	167	72
1923					
January	126	106	116	170	68
February	130	107	118	172	69
March	134	106	120	175	69
April	139	107	123	176	70
May	140	105	123	172	71
June	139	100	120	168	71
July	136	102	119	165	72
August	136	102	119	163	73
September	138	109	123	164	75
October	139	103	121	161	75
November	137	97	117	160	73
December	137	94	116	158	73
1924					
January	140	97	119	160	74
February	141	98	120	162	74
March	138	100	119	161	74
April	140	102	121	159	76

* Department of labor "All Commodities", excluding farm products and food.
\# Farm product index divided by index of non-agrl. commodities.

THE TREND OF MOVEMENT TO MARKET

Figures show wheat, corn, hogs, cattle, sheep receipts at primary markets; butter receipts at five markets, compiled by this Bureau. All figures given to nearest thousand, that is, three ciphers omitted:

Month	WHEAT Receipts Th. bu.	CORN Receipts Th. bu.	HOGS Receipts Thousands	CATTLE Receipts Thousands	SHEEP Receipts Thousands	BUTTER Receipts Th. lbs.
1921 Total	435,606	340,908	41,040	19,764	24,168	472,011
1922 "	413,106	378,598	44,067	23,218	22,364	530,601
1923 "	386,430	271,858	55,330	23,211	22,025	549,207
1923 Jan.	38,002	37,526	5,306	1,876	1,636	40,613
" Feb.	21,533	31,901	4,492	1,427	1,366	33,839
" Mar.	22,081	24,710	4,928	1,502	1,430	41,575
" Apr.	21,785	16,836	4,318	1,670	1,447	40,825
" May	17,457	10,809	4,524	1,900	1,794	54,617
" June	18,217	14,610	4,204	1,629	1,426	76,403
" July	36,435	18,515	4,181	1,903	1,661	64,086
" Aug.	63,012	20,845	3,714	2,214	1,800	47,831
" Sept	44,196	18,355	3,607	2,295	2,659	41,907
" Oct.	38,380	16,541	4,816	2,802	3,465	38,558
" Nov.	36,576	23,280	5,416	2,182	1,816	33,774
" Dec.	28,756	37,930	5,825	1,810	1,526	35,179
1924 Jan.	15,548	30,594	6,253	1,888	1,697	37,689
" Feb.	20,165	44,689	5,335	1,457	1,412	40,474
" Mar.	17,434	29,405	4,833	1,556	1,367	44,371
" Apr.	10,374	17,926	4,374	1,751	1,348	43,670

The movement of grain to market begins to show the end-of-the-season falling off. More corn came in during April than same month last year, however.

Compared to same month last year, practically the same number of hogs went to market in April, while there were more cattle and fewer sheep.

Butter receipts continue fairly heavy, reflecting the trend of production.

THE TREND OF EXPORT MOVEMENT

Compiled from Department of Commerce reports by Division of Statistical Research of this Bureau.

Month	WHEAT including flour	TOBACCO (Leaf)	BACON HAMS AND SHOULDERS	LARD	TOTAL* MEATS	COTTON# running bales
	1,000 Bushels	1,000 Pounds	1,000 Pounds	1,000 Pounds	1,000 Pounds	1,000 Bales
1922 12 months	232,302	430,908	631,452	766,950	734,118	6,114
1923 January	12,519	41,309	74,432	107,786	86,938	474
" February	12,197	24,380	64,488	89,056	75,023	360
" March	10,725	31,688	66,441	109,187	75,933	318
" April	10,195	40,141	68,528	85,475	77,963	260
" May	14,396	28,421	64,608	93,199	72,605	160
" June	12,881	49,730	59,473	64,605	68,799	215
" July	12,822	44,105	64,264	69,479	74,127	172
" August	19,929	33,480	69,194	83,758	80,112	244
" September	22,465	37,646	76,911	83,630	88,833	689
" October	18,652	44,949	72,341	76,378	83,183	774
" November	12,147	49,381	71,947	74,251	85,069	767
" December	12,991	49,270	76,263	98,578	89,890	846
1923 12 months	171,919	474,500	828,890	1,035,382	958,475	5,279
1924 January	12,143	47,579	79,067	132,758	90,430	547
" February	10,019	39,183	81,108	99,910	90,462	482
" March	9,374	61,172	66,695	100,726	74,464	332
" April	8,418	59,219	57,546	73,307	64,474	321

A general falling off in exports during April, though substantially more cotton and tobacco went out of the country than during April last year.

* Includes fresh, canned and pickled beef, bacon, hams and shoulders; fresh, canned, and pickled pork; mutton and lamb.

Includes linters.

COLD STORAGE SITUATION

May 1 holdings (Shows nearest million, six figures omitted:)

Commodity	5 Year Average	Year Ago	Month Ago	May 1, 1924.
Creamery butter, lbs.	6	3	8	9
American cheese, lbs.	12	14	28	26
Case eggs, cases	4*	4*	1*	4*
Total poultry, lbs.	57	75	76	52
Total beef, lbs.	136	79	93	78
Total pork, lbs.	899	940	932	905
Lard, lbs.	118	85	86	102
Lamb & Mutton, lbs.	9	6	2	2
Total meats, lbs.	1,087	1,094	1,108	1,060
Apples, bbls.	1	1	4	2

Storage holdings of butter increased during April. Eggs continued to go into storage in some volume. Pork and beef moved outward in moderate quantity.

Compared with the average situation this date, stocks are low in case of beef, lard, poultry and mutton; high in case of pork, butter, cheese and apples. Egg stocks are about average.

The low storage holdings tend to strengthen the position of beef and lamb producers, while the opposite is true of dairy products and pork.

* Represent thousands, three figures being omitted.

GENERAL BUSINESS INDICATORS RELATED TO AGRICULTURE

	1923 Apr.	1924 Mar.	1924 Apr.	Month's Trend
PRODUCTION				
Pig iron daily (Thou. tons)	118	112	108	Decrease
Bituminous coal (Millions tons)	43	40	29	Decrease
Automobiles shipped (Thou. carloads)	46	54	49	Decrease
CONSUMPTION				
Cotton by mills (Thou. bales)	576	484	480	Decrease
Unfilled orders Steel Corp. (Thou. T.)	7,289	4,783	4,208	Decrease
Building permits (Millions dollars)	292	334	285	Decrease
Hogs slaughtered (Thousands)	2,924	2,976	2,809	Decrease
Cattle " "	1,080	991	1,108	Increase
Sheep " "	855	719	726	Increase
MOVEMENTS				
Bank clearing (N.Y.) (Billions dollars)	18	20	20	Same
Car loadings (Weekly av., Thousands)	942	917	880	Decrease
Mail order sales (Millions dollars)	31	31	34	Increase
Men employed, N. Y. State Factories (Thou.)	566	542	524	Decrease
Av. price 25 indus. stocks (Dollars)	113	110	107	Lower
Interest rate (4-6 Mo. Paper)	5.13	4.59	4.63	Higher
Retail Food Price Index (Dept. Labor)	143	144	141	Lower
Wholesale Price Index (Dept, Labor)	159	150	148	Lower

Business has eased down. It is definitely down from the boom peak of last year. Automobile, textile, railway and allied lines show lessoned activity. Construction work is still heavy but shows signs of some let-up.

This condition is reflecting itself in a somewhat easier labor situation on the farms, although wages are not yet affected. If an industrial slump should go on to the point of some unemployment, it might affect next fall's market for such farm products as lamb, high quality butter and eggs, and the more expensive types of fruits and vegetables. For the present, however, it appears that any danger to the farmer's market from industrial recession will be more than offset by a lowering in some of his costs of production and living.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS 18 PER CENT MORE EFFECTIVE THAN BEFORE THE WAR

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(Ed. Note – Farm production in the United States has made a great forward stride in efficiency within the last few years. This factor is not receiving the general consideration which its significance warrants. In fact, it underlies the whole recent and present agricultural situation.)

Farm Labor 18 Per Cent More Effective

Farm labor became more effective in crop production in the United States from 1910 to 1920 by about 18 per cent, or nearly one-fifth. By means of more and better machinery, by means of time saved and devoted to effective work, by actually working harder or longer hours, and in general by economy of effort, the ratio of crop production to farm workers advanced about 18 per cent in the 10 years.

Crop production grew in mass about 13 per cent from 1910 to 1920 and farm workers declined in number about 4.2 per cent, or to 95.8 per cent of 1910. The ratio of crop production to agricultural workers is obtained by dividing 113 by 95.8.

The 1910 census reported the number of agricultural workers as of April 15 while the 1920 census reported as of January 1, and the difference of 3½ months is important. Hence, in this computation the number of farm laborers reported for January 1, 1920, has been increased to an April 15 basis so as to be comparable with 1910.

Crop Production Increased.

To avoid an annual variation in crop production, an average production of seven years, 1907-1913, has been taken for 1910 and of 1917-1923 for 1920. The mass, or quantity, of this production increased 13 per cent in the 10 years.

This is not appreciably modified by an increased crop yield per acre of seven-tenths of 1 per cent from the average of 1907-1913 to 1917-1923, even if mostly due to the weather and but little to the farmer.

This crop production increase of 13 per cent accords closely with the 12 per cent increase in crop acreage from 1910 to 1920, shown by the census. In round numbers, the acreage of crops with acreage reports was 311,000,000 acres in 1910 and 349,000,000 acres in 1920.

Farm Workers Decreased.

War and post-war conditions had a profound effect on farm labor. Some millions of men were taken from farms for army, navy, public civilian service, war industries, and for other employment. Non-agricultural wage rates grew to great proportions. Farm wage rates lagged far behind, and they had to lag because farmers could not afford to pay competitive wages. When the census was taken in 1920 for the date of January 1, wage rates were at their peak, and "deflation" had not begun, as it did later in 1920. Agricultural workers who were discharged from army and navy after the armistice in November 11, 1918, did not all return to farm work.

To the hired laborers on farms on January 1, there are always subsequent accessions every year, so that by April 15, the date of the census of 1910, their number had greatly increased. These accessions for 1920 are estimated and included in the total number of persons having agricultural occupations to an extent justified by information, and still the total remains below 1910.

From 1880 to 1890, the number of persons having agricultural occupations increased 10.5 per cent; from 1890 to 1900, 21.1 per cent; from 1900 to 1910, 20.7 per cent; but from 1910 to 1920, taking the census figures as they were reported, there was a decrease of 13.9 per cent. After adjustment of January 1, 1920, to April 15, the decrease was 4.2 per cent. There are related facts that support this indicated decrease.

Greater Efficiency by Using More Machinery

Farmers greatly increased their use of machinery from 1910 to 1920. The census reports only the value of implements and machinery, but on the basis of the 1913 wholesale price of metals and metal products, the chief materials, the implements and machinery of 1920 can be compared with those of 1910 in terms of a dollar of the same purchasing power. According to the census of 1910, the value of the implements and machinery on farms was $4.37 per acre of crops, and in 1920 it was $6.41.

It is approximately safe to say that during this period of 10 years, the implements and machinery per crop acre increased 46.7 per cent quantitatively. Not that there was such an increase in the number of sulky plows, cultivators, and so on, but that there was such an increase composed partly of number and partly of effectiveness of work done, as, for example, a two-bottom sulky plow in place of a walking plow, or a two-row instead of a one-row cultivator.

While land is more plentiful than labor, as it has been and is in this country, high production per worker is the economic objective instead of high production per acre, as must be the case where population presses severely enough on the land. Hence, the farmers of this country displace human labor with machinery. In large degree they did so from 1910 to 1920.

By Larger Acreage Per Farm

It is more economic to use certain machines on a large acreage than on a smaller one, and it may be for this reason that the average farm became 10 acres larger in 1920 than it was in 1910. The average size of farms was 138.1 acres in 1910 and 148.2 in 1920. The improved land average per farm was 75.2 acres in 1910 and 78.0 acres in 1920.

By Greater Grain and Hay Acreage

Grain and hay crops are especially machine-produced, and the acreage of these crops had a higher rate of increase from the average of 1907-1913 to that of 1917-1923 than other crops had. The acreage of all crops increased about 12 per cent, and of grains and hay about 14 per cent.

By Using More Animal Power

Horses and mules increased 4.8 per cent from 1910 to 1920, or from 24,042,882 to 25,199,552.

The substitution of animal power for human power during the decade is indicated by the increased ratio of horses and mules to agricultural workers. This increase was 11 per cent. In 1910, there were 1.94 horses and mules per agricultural worker and in 1920 the average was 2.13.

Another indication of increased use of animal power is the ratio of crop acreage to number of horses and mules. This ratio was 12.9 acres per horse and mule in 1910 and 13.8 acres in 1920, an increase of 7.0 per cent.

By Using Tractor Power

The tractor is a machine that is partly an important power substitute for animal power and partly an addition to the power of the farm. The census of 1920 ascertained that 3.6 per cent of the farms had tractors, but the fraction varied among the geographic divisions. In the West North Central States 8.4 per cent of the farms had tractors, in the Pacific States 7.5 per cent, in the Mountain States 6.5 per cent, and in the East North Central States 5.1 per cent. The other divisions of States, comprising New England, the North Atlantic, and the Southern States, had less than the national average. Substantially the entire farm tractor power of 1920 came to farms during the preceding decade.

By Using the Time-Saving Automobile

Human time saving was one of the great gifts to the farmer during the period from 1910 to 1920, and this was brought to him especially by the automobile. In 1920, the census found that 1,979,564 farms in the United States had 2,146,362 automobiles. These farms were 30.7 per cent of all farms. But in the West North Central States the fraction of the automobile-owning farms was as high as 57.6 per cent, followed in order

by 47.3 per cent in the East North Central States, 47.2 per cent in the Pacific States, 37.6 per cent in the Mountain States, and 35.2 per cent in the Middle Atlantic States.

By Motor Trucks

Motor trucks on farms at the time of the census of 1920 were much less numerous than automobiles and slightly less than tractors. There were 139,169 motor trucks on 131,551 farms, or 2.0 per cent of all farms. In the Middle Atlantic States 4.8 per cent of farms had motor trucks, in New England 4.7 per cent, and in the Pacific States 4.6 per cent.

These timesavers have given to the farm worker in a large degree another pair of hands. They have not increased his idleness, but have multiplied the effectiveness of his labor. The importance of these timesavers in substantiating the estimated gain of 18 per cent in the efficiency of farm workers from 1910 to 1920 is very great.

By Working Harder

During the decade the farm worker increased the crop area of his labor. Be the aids what they may, the average crop area per worker was 25.2 acres in 1910 and 29.4 acres in 1920, or an increase of 16.7 per cent.

High wage rates for farm labor beginning with 1917 have impelled the farmer to work harder. In 1916, the average wage rate for male farm labor per month without board in the United States was $32.83. The rate jumped to $40.43 in 1918 and successively to $64.95 in 1920.

The farmer hired labor only under practical compulsion and farm work was done more than before by himself and members of his family. Yet production increased. The farmer and the working members of his family have worked harder under the sudden impact of the change.

Continued Efficiency After 1920

It seems probable that the efficiency of farm labor at the end of the decade 1910–1920 has not deminished in the three subsequent years. In the average of these years, crop production has declined about 2 per cent, but for such a short period, the weather may account for the decline. For 1921, crop production was low, but had it been as high as in 1922 and 1923 it would have been more than enough to raise the everage for the three years to the average of 1917–1923.

The indications are that the number of agricultural workers decreased subsequent to 1920, with perhaps a temporary increase somewhere in the period of industrial readjustment beginning in 1920.

The department obtained at the end of 1922, information that led to an estimate of a net loss of 1,120,000 persons of the agricultural

population during that year, or about 3.6 per cent of that population, births and deaths not included in the reckoning. Although no estimate for 1923 has been made, a continued reduction of the agricultural population is probable, especially since it was a year of industrial activity and a continuation of the period when farmers were at a great economic disadvantage in the purchasing power of their products.

Hence, there is reason to suppose that the crop production of 1923, which was average, and a smaller number of persons with agricultural occupations combined to indicate an efficiency of farm labor that was a little above the 18 per cent of 1917–1923 over 1907–1913, especially since the aids to that labor have in some respects increased since 1920.

The Trend Since 1920 as Shown in New York

New York is the only State for which there is reliable information, by years, on farm population as well as production.

For each of the last seven years an estimate of the farm population of the State has been made by Dr. G. F. Warren by applying for each year a percentage of variation from the adjoining year, with the census farm population of 1920 as a base. The ratio of efficiency is between index numbers of crop production and those of farm population instead of persons with agricultural occupations, a distinction perhaps without great difference.

The average farm population of New York for the five years 1917–1921 being taken at 100, it declined to 95.4 in 1922 and to 91.5 in 1923. If the mass of crop production for the same five years is regarded as 100, it increased to 109.7 in 1922 and was 105.1 in 1923.

Upon computing the ratio of the index of crop production to the index of farm population, it is 100 for the same five years, 115.1 for 1922, and 114.9 for 1923.

The efficiency of farm labor in New York, with whatever aids it may have had, apparently increased about 15 per cent during the seven years 1917 to 1923, compared with 18 per cent for the United States for the 10 years 1910 to 1920.

While the period is too short to furnish stable averages, nevertheless the fact remains that crop production in New York, as in the United States, has been fully maintained in spite of a marked decrease in farm population.

THE HOG SITUATION

C. L. Harlan, Livestock Marketing Investigator, B. A. E.

The marketings of hogs to the end of May indicate conclusively that the spring crop of pigs in 1923 was the largest spring crop ever raised in the Corn Belt. It was probably around 2,000,000 head larger than the 1922 spring crop, which was the second largest ever raised. Since the beginning of the new packing year, November 1, 1923, the slaughter of hogs, the production, export, and domestic consumption of pork have all established new records.

Fewer Sows this Spring but Still above Normal

The brood sow estimate of April 1 showed about a 12 per cent reduction in brood sows on farms in the Corn Belt from last year. If this reduction in sows is approximately correct the number of sows farrowing in the Corn Belt this spring will be about 5 per cent less than the number farrowed in the spring of 1922 but 17 per cent larger than the number in the spring of 1921. The 1921 spring crop of pigs in the Corn Belt was about a normal crop based upon pre-war per capita production of products from inspected hog slaughter; it probably represents the maximum production that can be marketed under fairly normal conditions at prices that will put hog prices on a pre-war parity with all commodity prices.

Heavy Marketings of the Past Winter

The figures as to marketings and slaughter since November 1, 1923, show that the June, 1923, pig survey forecasted the Corn Belt production fairly accurately. This survey showed that the spring crop of 1923 in the Corn Belt States was 5.8 per cent larger than the 1922 spring crop. This represented an increase of around 2½ million hogs. This spring crop begins to move in large volume the latter part of October and continues through the following May.

The inspected slaughter of hogs from November 1, 1923, to May 1, 1924, was 2,843,000 head larger than in the same period a year previous. The marketings to the end of May indicate that the slaughter in May this year will be around 250,000 head smaller than in May last year. The slaughter from November 1 to June 1 this year will probably be around 2,600,000 head larger than same period a year before.

Since, however, the number of brood sows kept for farrow this spring was smaller than that of last spring, the Corn Belt marketings during the seven months, November 1 to June 1, would be increased over the same period a year ago by a part of this decrease even if the spring crops of pigs were the same in the two years. The decrease in sows, if as large as shown by the April 1 estimate, was over 1 million head. On the other hand, the contribution of the Corn Belt to the total market and commercial supply of hogs since November 1, 1923, has been proportionately larger than during

the same period the previous year due to the decreased production in other areas, outside the Corn Belt, that contribute to the commercial supply. Also, the figures giving the proportion of sows in the total inspected slaughter indicate that the greater part of the liquidation of brood sows took place before November 1, 1923, and hence did not go to swell the figures since that date. This liquidation apparently was of mature sows and the number of young sows kept for farrow in 1924 seems to have been at least as large as the number in 1923.

Appraising these various factors as accurately as available information makes possible the conclusion given in the opening paragraph that the increase was around 2,000,000 head seems justifiable.

The market movement of the 1923 spring crop was somewhat different from that of the 1922 crop, a larger percentage of the crop moving to market during the four winter months, November to February. Last year this percentage was about 58.6 while this year it was around 64. This was largely due to the much more unfavorable price ratio between corn and hogs existing the past winter compared with that of the winter before.

Smaller Gross Returns to Producers

This increased production of hogs instead of bringing increased returns to producers resulted in an actual reduction. The inspected slaughter for the four winter months, November to February, this year was 22,162,000 head and for the same period last year was 18,884,000 head, an increase of 3,278,000. The average cost to killers of the hogs slaughtered this year was only $15.14 a head compared to $18.48 last year. The total paid for the 22,162,000 head this year was about $13,500,000 less than for the 18,884,000 last year. While a part of this was due to a slightly reduced average weight, less than five pounds per head, the essential cause was the lower price per pound. Even though the marketings during March, April and May were somewhat smaller than the same months last year the average cost has been smaller than last year.

A Problem for the Packers to Handle the Heavy Slaughter

The distribution of the product from this enormous slaughter has been a difficult problem for the packing industry. Due largely to the heavy October slaughter the storage holdings of products at the beginning of the new packing year, November 1, 1923, were large, exceeding those on November 1, 1922, by over 100 million pounds and only exceeded on that date in 1918 and 1919. Packing policy seems to have been to move products into consumption as rapidly as possible and distributive channels have been burdened with supplies. While exports were larger than last year they were far from equaling the increased production.

The following table indicates the trend of winter production and distribution this year and last:

Winter Packing Season	Production	Storage Nov. 1	Added to Storage	Storage March 1	Moved into Consumption	Exports	Domestic Consumption
1922-23	3,248	432	406	838	2,842	644	2,199
1923-24	3,685	543	404	947	3,280	767	2,514

(All in millions of pounds, i. e. 000,000 omitted.)

In the winter of 1921-22 the domestic consumption was 1,832 million pounds and in 1918-19 it was around 1,837 million. These were the two largest years prior to 1922-23.

On May 1, 1923, the storage holdings were 1,007,000,000 pounds. This was 11,000,000 pounds less than on May 1, 1923, and less than on the same date in 1918, 1919 or 1920. During April last year, storage increased nearly 90,000,000 pounds while during April this year it decreased 11,000,000.

Probably Less Pork this Summer than Last but Still a Heavy Supply

These storage holdings are most significant when considered in conjunction with the probable supply of hogs to be marketed from June 1 to November 1, since it is during these months that surplus stocks must be distributed. During this period the supply of hogs consists of hogs farrowed in the previous fall, of brood sows that raised pigs in the spring and of some early spring pigs. The December, 1923, pig survey indicated a decrease of about 4 per cent in the fall crop of the Corn Belt in 1923 from that of 1922. The decrease in sows farrowing this spring was estimated in April as 12 per cent from those of last spring. The mortality of fall pigs last winter does not appear to have been any larger than the previous winter. This evidence indicates some decrease from last year in the supply of hogs available from June 1 to November 1.

However, there are several factors that influence the actual market supply of hogs during this period. If corn prices are high in relation to hog prices there is a tendency to sell corn and carry hogs, especially brood sows, on pasture and finish them on new corn; also to reduce the grain ration to spring pigs. This reduces the market supply of sows and early pigs before November 1. On the other hand, if the crop of new corn is short or if cholera is unusually prevalent the marketings of light hogs and pigs in September and October may be unduly large. Or if the number of sows kept for fall farrow this year is materially smaller than last year the number of sows for market during these months would be increased.

Considering both storage holdings of products and the indicated number of hogs available it seems probable that the supplies of products for distribution during the next five months will be smaller than the amounts distributed during the same months last year, but much larger than those of any previous year. The present indications as to both foreign and domestic demand do not seem to justify expectations of prices for either hogs or products higher than those for these months a year ago.

THE SITUATION IN VARIOUS KEY STATES

(From Reports of State Statisticians of this Bureau)

KENTUCKY. Planting delayed one to two weeks in most parts of State by rains. Cool, wet weather has caused improvement of meadows, pastures and winter grains but dry warm weather needed for all other crops and for planting and cultivation. Spring lamb crop late, and sharply reduced by severe mortality of both lambs and ewes at lambing and by disease, until near close of April. Tobacco acreage sharply reduced in dark types in western half of State, but apparently about same as last year in burley district eastern half of State. Plants plentiful but late in both districts. Labor at hand generally ample but farmers hiring little as possible due to high wages demanded and low prices of farm products. Buying of implements, equipment or improvements being cut to the bone. Farm indebtedness generally increasing rather than decreasing. -- H. F. Bryant.

GEORGIA. There is increasing and serious complaint in the shortage of seed, labor and money. Crops will be made under the most distressing conditions in years, but that they will be made in spite of all handicaps, South Georgia has proved. They have managed to get in their crops, and farm work is progressing very well. Planting in North Georgia has been greatly delayed by weather conditions. The weather has retarded germination. In the State as a whole about two-thirds of corn and about four-fifths of cotton have been planted. Replanting is much in evidence in the northern part of the State. All crops are late from cotton to peaches. Fruit crops continue excellent. Warm dry weather is very badly needed. -- Z. R. Pettet.

IOWA. The outstanding features in the Iowa agricultural situation are:

1. A labor surplus in both farm and city.
2. Crops, including corn, in critical condition because of drought.
3. All indications point toward a substantial increase in the corn acreage being planted.
4. The Iowa price index of farm products increased from 107 in March to 109 in April as compared with 109 in April, 1923.
5. Corn is selling on Iowa farms for 64 cents, which is 12 per cent less than a year ago. Heavy hogs are selling on par with a year ago, light hogs at 6 per cent less, butter 8 per cent less, eggs 3 per cent less, fat cattle from 5 to 9 per cent more and feeders for 14 per cent more than a year ago.
6. The completed assessor's enumerations shows 17 per cent fewer sows to farrow this spring than a year ago, 3 per cent less hogs January 1, 1924, 5 per cent more milk cows, 1 per cent less other cattle, 14 per cent more farm tractors, 16 per cent more farm trucks and 6 per cent more farm-owned automobiles. The last three items indicate increased production per man, remaining on the farm.

There is a general slackening of industry over the State with positive evidence of increasing unemployment. Very little road work or construction work is under way. -- Charles F. Sarle.

ILLINOIS. Farm work has made favorable progress but continues somewhat behind schedule due to late spring and tendency of farmers to hire labor

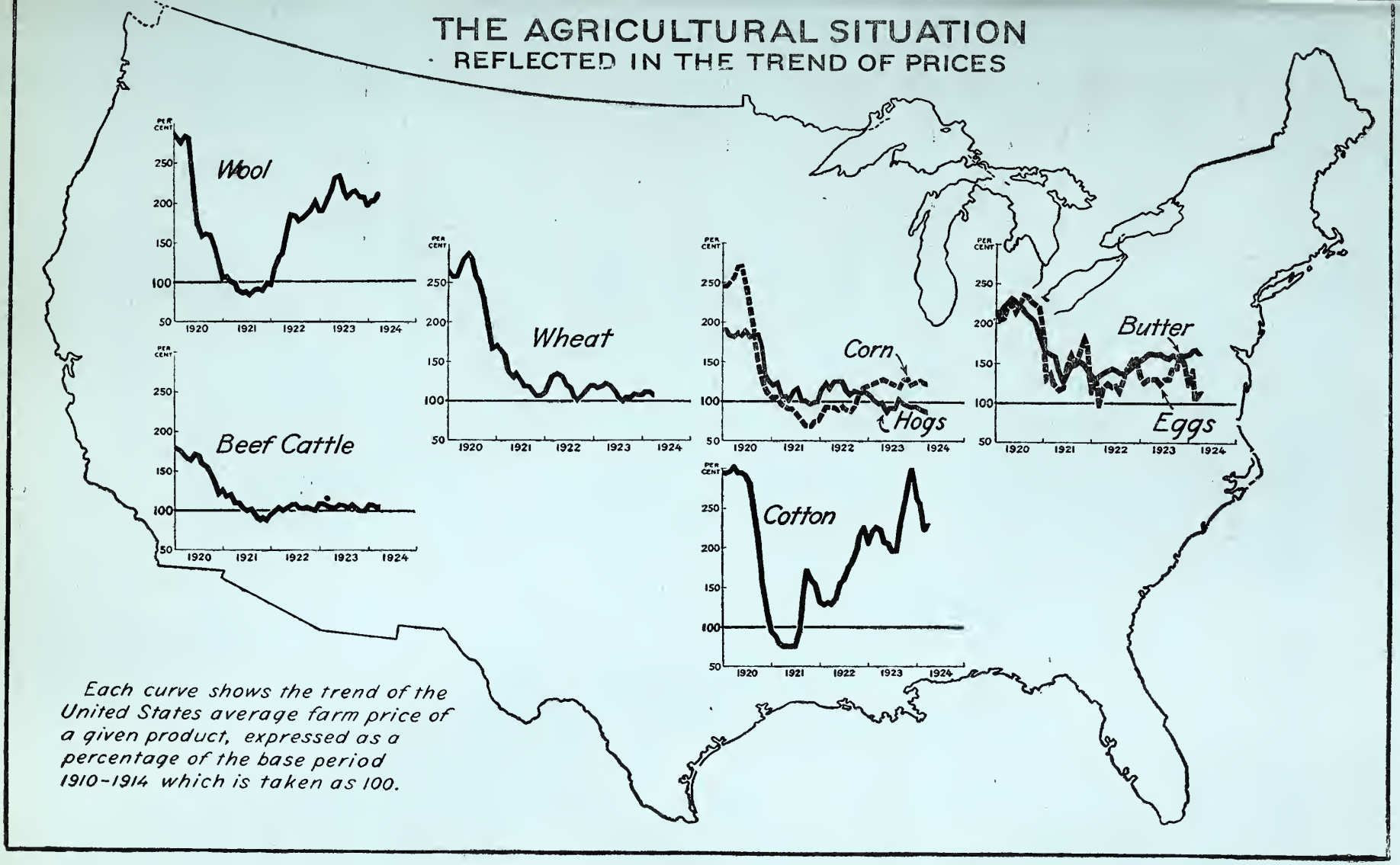
sparingly. Labor supply nearly equal to demand. Prospect for increased acreages of corn, oats and hay at expense of wheat. Growth of spring-sown small grains and hay rather backward but prospect is about average. Wheat prospect unfavorable but improving; conditions vary widely and abandonment has been unusually heavy; thin or patchy stands are common throughout the main wheat belt. Livestock in good health and pastures furnishing fair to good feed. Cattle feeding 5 per cent less than a year ago. Sheep numbers on the increase generally. Hog numbers being gradually reduced; spring pig crop 10 to 15 per cent less than a year ago. All plant growth healthy but slightly backward due to cool season. Corn planting is fully a week later than usual; nearly complete in central and southern counties and well under way in north. -- A. J. Surratt.

NEBRASKA. Farm work has made good progress considering the late season. Low temperatures, and frosts until May 15 have made the season backward. Rainfall has been light, but while the surface soil is dry, the subsoil has sufficient moisture. About 43 per cent of the corn was planted by May 15, but the soil is too cold. Slight deterioration in winter wheat. Grass coming slowly in range sections, and prolonged feeding of cattle was necessary. Slight damage to fruit and few early potatoes from frost. Farm labor sufficient with few exceptions. The condition of livestock is generally satisfactory except hogs. Considerable loss of pigs and some brood sows. Very little idle land reported, but less cultivated acreage due to increased tame hay and pasture. However, western range and pastures will be stocked about 75 per cent of carrying capacity, or about the same as last year. -- A. E. Anderson.

COLORADO. Mostly seasonal changes since April report. No precipitation since May 1. Heavy winds have taken moisture rapidly; heavy soils baking. Crops making slow growth. Farm operations making good progress. Corn planting in full swing. Beginning cultivation and thinning of beets. Bean planting started. Fruit generally good. Lambing about at peak; shearing well advanced. Reservoirs well filled; rivers low; snows melting too slowly for full flow direct irrigation. -- W. W. Putnam.

TEXAS. Due to sub-normal temperatures, plant growth has been retarded and much replanting of cotton, corn and kafirs has been necessary. Wheat and oat harvest will begin by the end of the month; both cereals are above the average in condition. Farming conditions are the best in recent years. Most farmers are out of debt and if price and yield of cotton are good, they will have a little surplus money this year. There is a continuation of breaking up of large tracts into farms and a considerable influx of farmers from other States. A number of new textile mills are being built. Weevil have appeared as usual in South Texas, but cotton growers are well supplied with calcium arsenate this year. The labor supply remains fairly constant with the farm demand not pronounced yet. A large amount of public work is being done. With rains in June, livestock will continue to do well and the large calf crop will hold its milk growth. The mohair clip was very good and prices mainly satisfactory. A heavy wool clip is now being made and largely being concentrated in warehouses. Cattle men have a disposition to restock the ranges, but shortage of cash and limited credit have a retarding effect.

-- H. H. Schultz.



Relative prices tell the story of optimism or depression. With urban prices and wages from 60 to 100 per cent above pre-war level, producers of beef cattle, wheat, hogs, or other products selling at or below pre-war prices, are at serious economic disadvantage. This chart shows at a glance why the Far West is favoring sheep over beef cattle; why the Wheat Belt favors less wheat and more dairying; why the Corn Belt is increasing corn and reducing hogs; why the South has increased cotton acreage.